



## ***AOT in Action***

### ***TOURISM WORKS FOR ARIZONA!***

Welcome to AOT in Action, your weekly e-newsletter from the Arizona Office of Tourism (AOT).

#### **A Message from the Director:**

Good morning.

This is an exciting week for AOT, as Arizona will proudly host more than 400 members of the travel industry for the Educational Seminar for Tourism Organizations (ESTO) conference. State tourism professionals and destination marketing organizations from across the nation will be at The Phoenician beginning Wednesday, August 15 through Saturday, August 18, for what is widely considered to be one of the premier educational and networking travel industry conferences. Through dynamic breakout presentations, informative speakers and peer networking, ESTO provides our industry a wonderful opportunity to attain information that addresses specific challenges and concerns of the state tourism professional and destination marketing organization. This chance to host ESTO also provides AOT and the entire Grand Canyon State with a terrific opportunity to show off our incredible destination to our colleagues. For more information on ESTO, please visit [www.tia.org](http://www.tia.org).

Have a great week.

Margie A. Emmermann  
Director  
Arizona Office of Tourism

## AOT News Flash

### PACT Awarded TEAM Grant Check from AOT

On Saturday, Governor Napolitano presented the Prescott Area Coalition for Tourism (PACT) with a Teamwork for Effective Arizona Marketing (TEAM) \$130,000 grant from AOT. TEAM, a matching grant program created by AOT, enables communities and organizations throughout Arizona to develop and promote their tourism destinations. TEAM grants are designed to help communities fund advertising, public relations campaigns, research and strategic planning and other tourism-related marketing efforts. Over the course of fiscal year 2008, AOT will award more than \$1.5 million to 47 different communities and organizations throughout Arizona in all 15 counties, including six tribal entities. PACT, a regional tourism organization consisting of the City of Prescott, Town of Prescott Valley, Town of Chino Valley, Yavapai Prescott Indian Tribe, and the Yavapai Heritage Foundation, plans to use the funds to complete marketing projects such as nationwide ad placements and Web site enhancements. For more information on TEAM grants, please visit [www.azot.gov](http://www.azot.gov).

### FY07 Rural Tourism Development Grant Project Completed!

In FY07 the City of Benson was awarded \$36,750 through the Rural Tourism Development Grant Program for their project titled the Benson Visitor Center Monument Sign Project. The project was completed this summer. Bob Nilson, the City of Benson Tourism Director stated since the sign installation in May the visitor center counts were up 18.3 percent in May 2007 over May 2006, and the counts were up 39.4 percent June 2007 over June 2006. They have seen a visible increase at local events as well. For more information on the Rural Tourism Development Grant Program, please contact Karen McClurg, Tourism Education and Development Manager at 602-364-3708 or via e-mail at [kmcclurg@azot.gov](mailto:kmcclurg@azot.gov).



### Rural Tourism Development Grant Program Guidelines for FY08

The Rural Tourism Development Grant Program (RTDGP) guidelines for FY08 are now available. The primary objective of this competitive grant program is to provide coordinated funding for tourism related infrastructure projects in rural communities throughout the State. The funding amount for FY08 is \$550,000. These funds assist rural economic development through tourism to strengthen the regional and local economies and expand tourism in rural and Tribal communities throughout Arizona. The primary function of the infrastructure project must be tourism development and the project must be designed to initiate economic growth and enhance future tourism development. Applications are available on AOT's business-to-business Web site [www.azot.gov](http://www.azot.gov) under the Grants section. Applications must be received by the Arizona Office of Tourism no later than 5 p.m. Thursday, August, 30, 2007. If you have any questions, please feel free to contact Karen McClurg, Tourism Education and Development Manager at [kmcclurg@azot.gov](mailto:kmcclurg@azot.gov) or by phone at 602-364-3708.

## Trippin' with AOT

### Register Now for the 10<sup>th</sup> Annual Arizona Showcase in Hermosillo

The Arizona Office of Tourism will hold the 10<sup>th</sup> Annual Arizona Showcase October 3-4, 2007 in Hermosillo, Sonora, Mexico. This event promotes fall and holiday shopping, attractions and

accommodations throughout the Grand Canyon State. This year there will be a special emphasis on weddings. The first night of the event will be a trade show for travel agents and media representatives. The second night of the event will highlight a charity fashion show with local models – specifically targeting high income families and individuals with a strong propensity to travel. The cost to participate varies from \$800–\$2,000 depending on type of supplier and level of participation, plus travel expenses. Sponsorships are also available. The deadline to participate is September 1, 2007. Early booking discounts apply. Please contact Kristy Swanson at 602-364-3696 or via e-mail at [kswanson@azot.gov](mailto:kswanson@azot.gov).

## Industry News

### Bush Signs Bill that will Attract New Visitors

The travel industry is applauding President Bush for signing into law what industry leaders are calling the most significant travel reforms in more than a decade. The legislation, Improving America's Security by Implementing Unfinished Recommendations of the 9/11 Commission Act of 2007, includes an expansion of the Visa Waiver Program and will seek to provide a more efficient and welcoming arrival process at America's top 20 overseas inbound airports, which welcome 90 percent of all overseas arrivals to the U.S. "This important legislation tightens security while allowing for millions more business and leisure travelers from overseas to come to the U.S.," said Jonathan Tisch, chairman of the Travel Business Roundtable and chairman and CEO of Loews Hotels. "With the signing of this legislation, President Bush has increased U.S. security and acted to improve the travel experience for millions of visitors to the United States," added Stevan Porter, chairman of the Discover America Partnership and president, the Americas, InterContinental Hotels Group. Details at 202-408-2183. (*Special to TA*)

### PWC Finds High Satisfaction in Lodging

PricewaterhouseCoopers research and data from the American Customer Satisfaction Index, the U.S. Department of Labor and Smith Travel Research show that although there was a small decrease reported in the first quarter of 2007, customer satisfaction levels in the lodging industry are at positive record levels with a recent high index value of 75 in 2006. The high level of customer satisfaction comes even as the lodging industry has reduced the number of employees per available and occupied room and while many other industries, especially tourism -related, have experienced declines. Although the customer satisfaction scores declined to 71 in the first quarter of 2007, most of the decline was among smaller hotel chains, which experienced the largest decline in satisfaction scores, according to ACSI. (*Modern Agent.com*)

### International Visits up 10 Percent in May

The Commerce Department announced that 3.8 million international visitors traveled to the U.S. in May, an increase of 10 percent over May 2006. Total visitation for the first five months of 2007 was up almost 8 percent from May 2006 and \$47.6 billion year-to-date, also up 8 percent from the same period in 2006. Canadian visitation grew 4 percent over May 2006, while arrivals from Mexico, to interior U.S. points, were up 27 percent in May. Overseas arrivals, excluding Canada and Mexico, were up 11 percent in May and up 7 percent for the year compared to the first five months of 2006. Details at 202-482-0140. (*Special to TA*)

### TIA, TBA to Explore Full Merger

The Travel Industry Association will continue discussions about a full merger with the Travel Business Roundtable, a separate organization that has been lobbying side-by-side with TIA as a "strategic partner." In an e-mail letter to its members Tuesday, TIA President and CEO Roger Dow said the TIA board has authorized "continuing conversations" about "fully merging" the two groups and absorbing the staff of a third entity, the Discover America Partnership. The TBR,

headed by Loews Hotels' chief Jonathan Tisch, is an organization of about 70 travel industry CEOs and other senior executives. It has carried on its own lobbying efforts but began to coordinate more closely with TIA as part of a strategy to join forces to increase the industry's clout on Capitol Hill. The Discover America Partnership is a broad coalition of travel and travel-related entities, including TIA and TBR, which was funded for the specific purpose of reversing the decline in the number of overseas visitors to the U.S. TIA said the Partnership is funded only through the end of this year. In his e-mail letter to members, Dow said the board also discussed the importance of maintaining and enhancing TIA's core program, including International Pow Wow, ESTO, the Marketing Outlook Forum and research programs. (*Travel Weekly.com*, 8/7; *ATA Special Report*)

### **DiscoverAmerica.com: Coming March 2008**

The [DiscoverAmerica.com](http://DiscoverAmerica.com) team, along with its development partners have been hard at work researching, designing and developing strategy for the first ever Official Travel and Tourism Website of the United States. To date, the research phase is complete and preliminary designs have been reviewed and approved by the Department of Commerce and shared with the DiscoverAmerica.com Advisory Council and TIA Board. States and destinations will be presented with the designs, along with discussion, at ESTO and further meetings are planned with the VUSA committees this summer to discuss their involvement with the sites. September begins the build out of the sites with a targeted launch in the initial five markets (UK, Germany, Canada, Mexico and Japan) in March 2008. The team is also working towards collecting rich and robust content to populate the sites, confirming products and vendors for the construction and marketing phases, and finalizing the business model that will allow self funding beginning January 2009. For advertising or partnership inquiries with DiscoverAmerica.com please contact [discoveramerica@tia.org](mailto:discoveramerica@tia.org). Stay tuned for more exciting developments from Discover America!